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VENEZUELA HAS SHIP FROM CUBA

Capture Made Following
Firing on Vessel

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Two Venezuelan warships fired on a Cuban vessel fleeing in Venezuelan waters and captured the boat and its crew, Venezuela's armed forces chief said Wednesday.

Rear Adm. Jesus Carbonell Izquierdo said the Cuban ship Alecrin was intercepted Tuesday night during a patrol designed to thwart landings of Havana-trained guerrillas in Venezuela.

Radio Caracas quoted President Raul Leoni as saying it was possible the Alecrin was on a guerrilla landing mission, but Carbonell said in a Defense Ministry communique that the vessel "cannot be said to be a spy ship until she has been inspected thoroughly."

TWO ACCOUNTS VARY

The incident took place near Los Testigos Keys, Venezuelan dependencies about 270 miles east of Caracas, and within territorial waters, the communique said. Los Testigos are about 40 miles off the Venezuelan coast, but Venezuela claims territorial

waters 12 miles out from its possessions.

A Cuban account put the incident some 45 miles from Los Testigos.

Cuba framed a formal protest and demanded that the Alecrin and its 38 crew members be released. It claimed the Alecrin had been fishing innocently along with other Cuban vessels, and had been badly damaged by machine-gun and cannon fire from the Venezuelan ships Calamary and Almirante Braden.

Carbonell said the Alecrin was damaged slightly by machine-gun fire after she refused to stop and submit to inspection by the Venezuelan vessels.

TAKEN TO STATION

The Alecrin was taken to the naval station at Carupano on Venezuela's north coast, the ministry said.

Men and arms from Cuba have been intercepted before on Venezuela's shores. The government said recently it expected a renewal of guerrilla activity aimed at disrupting the Venezuelan presidential election Dec. 1.

In Havana, the Cuban government handed a formal protest to the Swiss ambassador, who has represented Venezuelan interests in Communist Cuba since Caracas broke relations with Havana in 1962.

The protest said the capture was a "typical act of international piracy." It demanded payment of damages and release of the Alecrin and crew.